**Common Benchmark Assessment Professional Development**

Stratford STEM Magnet High School

June 6-17, 2011

Benchmark assessments communicate a strong message to students, teachers, and parents about what knowledge and skills are important to learn, what knowledge is valued, and how learning will be measured.

Benchmark assessments can serve instructional planning purposes by providing educators information needed to develop and adjust curriculum and instruction to meet students’ learning needs.  To do so, benchmark assessments must be aligned with content and provide feedback on students’ strengths and weaknesses relative to specific curriculum goals.

Teachers can use the results from the benchmark assessments to plan subsequent instruction.  When administered across classrooms, grade levels, or content areas, benchmark assessment results provide teachers an opportunity for collaborative reflection, analysis, and action.  Leadership teams and school administrators can also use benchmark assessment results to plan and target specific program interventions to support student learning.

The evaluation of quality in any benchmark assessment system starts with a clear understanding of the purpose(s) an assessment is intended to serve and consideration of other issues that indicate how well a given assessment or assessment system serves that purpose.  Benchmark assessments must:

* Be *aligned* with district and school learning goals and intended purpose
* Provide *reliable* information for intended score interpretations and uses
* Be *instructionally sensitive*
* Be *fair and accessible*
* Have *high utility*
* Provide useful *reporting* for intended users and purposes

These interrelated factors influence the *validity* of benchmark assessments and the role benchmark assessments play in a comprehensive assessment system.

Benchmark alignment describes how well what is assessed matches both what schools are teaching and the purpose for giving the assessment.  For benchmark assessments to provide information for making valid inferences about student learning, the assessment must be aligned with the learning goals, standards, or success criteria from the beginning of the development or adoption process.

One way to ensure alignment is  “...to create benchmark assessments that enrich student learning opportunities, focus on the big ideas of a content area and counteract curriculum narrowing by designing benchmark assessments that allow students to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts and formats” (Herman and Baker, 1998, p. 56).

The essential issues for benchmark alignment focuses on these questions:

1. Do the assessments reflect what is most important for students to know and be able to do?
2. Do the assessments capture the depth and breadth of learning goals?
3. Is the assessment framework consistent with the local curriculum framework?
4. Does the sequence of assessment content on successive tests match that of the curriculum?
5. Which curriculum goals should each assessment be aligned with—those of the prior instructional period, those of subsequent instructional periods, or both?

The answers to these questions help to illuminate the importance of selecting and using benchmark assessment questions that aligns well with our state, common core, and ACT standards.  An analysis of student responses can further help to assure that individual benchmark assessments are measuring the identified concepts at the appropriate time during the academic year.

You will need to create 5 CBAs.

Timeline of CBA for 2011-2012 School Year:

August- Pre-Assessment

September 27, 28 CBA #1

November 3,4 CBA #2

December 15, 16 Semester Exam

February 7, 8 CBA #3

March 14, 15 CBA #4

April 25, 26 CBA #5

May 23, 24 Semester Exam

CBA Criteria:

Multiple Choice 35 Standards Based Questions

1 Essay with Common Grading Rubric

To complete your task you will need

TN state standards: <http://www.tn.gov/education/curriculum.shtml>

Common Core Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>

ACT Standards: <http://www.act.org/standard/>